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The Afloat Prepositioning Program: Do Service Mission Differences Preclude
Total Jointness?

by

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A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

3 Feb 2003

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ABSTRACT

Success in regional and major theater wars hinges on the ability to rapidly deploy and employ sufficient military power to overwhelm any adversary. Central to the U. S. military's ability to deploy forces is the collection of equipment, material and munitions prepositioned aboard ships throughout the world. As the leadership seeks opportunities to merge systems and resources under the guise of jointness, commonalities in missions and cargoes of the Afloat Prepositioning Force (APF) make it a prime target for integration.

Ranging from tanks and trucks to food and fuel, the prepositioning load lists provide a flexible range of deterrent and combat options to the Combatant Commander. While similar items are prepositioned by all of the services, there is enough difference in quantity or mission to bar centralized control. Removing critical items such as food and fuel from the prepositioning kits effectively obliterates the stand-alone nature of these equipment sets.

Certain management functions (e.g. stock rotation, equipment and ship maintenance, and weapons system upgrades) which are common to all portions of the APF have also been targeted for joint control. The fiscal savings of these efforts would be far outweighed by the costs in security and clear lines of command and control.

The mission of each respective service remains unique. The distinct requirements driven by these unique missions preclude merging the existing APF into a single joint entity. While the distant future may bring more jointness to the APF arena, the fact remains that today's program works best when managed by the warfighters. This paper examines the feasibility of unifying the Afloat Prepositioning program and shows that service mission differences prohibit total jointness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>ABSTRACT</u>	ii
<u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u>	iii
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	1
<u>THE HISTORY OF AFLOAT PREPOSITIONING</u>	1
<u>The Near Term Prepositioning Force</u>	2
<u>Prepositioning in the Gulf War</u>	3
<u>The Army Comes on Board</u>	3
<u>Prepositioning Forces Today</u>	4
<u>COMMON PREPOSITIONED ITEMS</u>	4
<u>General Purpose Vehicles</u>	4
<u>Expeditionary Airfields</u>	5
<u>Habitability and Personnel Support</u>	5
<u>Material Management Requirements</u>	6
<u>PREPOSITIONED MATERIAL DIFFERENCES</u>	6
<u>Common Items in Different Quantities</u>	6
<u>Maintenance</u>	7
<u>Aviation Component</u>	7
<u>Load Plans</u>	8
<u>ARE THERE ANY CANDIDATES FOR JOINTNESS?</u>	8
<u>Fuel</u>	8
<u>Munitions</u>	9
<u>Personnel Support Items</u>	10
<u>Humanitarian Relief</u>	10
<u>Joint Maintenance</u>	11
<u>DIFFERENT MISSIONS MEAN DIFFERENT NEEDS</u>	12
<u>THE FUTURE OF AFLOAT PREPOSITIONING</u>	14
<u>Mobile Offshore Bases (MOB)</u>	14
<u>Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) Ships</u>	15
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	16
<u>NOTES</u>	18
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	21

INTRODUCTION

Strategic Agility is the timely concentration, employment and sustainment of U. S. military power anywhere, at our own initiative, and at a speed and tempo that our adversaries cannot match... **Power Projection** is the ability to rapidly and effectively deploy and sustain U. S. military power in and from multiple, dispersed locations until conflict resolution. Power projection provides the flexibility to respond swiftly to crises, with force packages that can be adapted rapidly to the environment in which they must operate, and if necessary, fight their way into a denied theater.ⁱ

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States military has been regarded more and more often as the world's police force. Success in regional and major theater wars hinges on the ability to rapidly deploy and employ sufficient military power to overwhelm any adversary and achieve a favorable political solution. Central to the America's ability to swiftly deploy forces is the collection of equipment, material and munitions prepositioned aboard ships throughout the world.

Currently, the ships of the Afloat Prepositioning Force (APF) are managed by the Military Sealift Command, but individual cargoes are controlled by individual services or the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). Since the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, American military leaders have sought ways to unify common elements of their services in a joint arena. Commonalities in mission and cargoes of the APF make it a logical choice for integration and jointness. This paper will examine the feasibility of unifying the Afloat Prepositioning program and show that service mission differences preclude total jointness.

THE HISTORY OF AFLOAT PREPOSITIONING

In 1964 the Army and Navy proposed a combined fleet of ships and aircraft to transport men and equipment to Europe from their bases in the United States. The sealift arm

of this fleet, known as Fast Deployment Logistics (FDL) ships, was to consist of over 30 vessels specially designed to deliver the equipment for two Army divisions in less than 30 days. Funding for FDL ship construction was included in the 1965 military appropriation, and construction began on a new shipyard in Pascagoula, MS, where the FDL ships would be built. A ship design was approved, and construction was to begin in 1968. In 1967, however, the program was cancelled by Congress, amid fears that the United States would become a world-wide police force. The chairman of the Senate Armed Services committee, Senator Richard B. Russell (D-GA) was concerned that “if it is easy for U. S. to go anywhere and do anything, we will always be going somewhere and doing something.”ⁱⁱ

The Near Term Prepositioning Force

The modern APF made its first appearance in 1980 when President Carter established the Near Term Prepositioning Force (NTPF) as part of the Joint Rapid Deployment Force. The NTPF consisted of seven ships – three civilian charters and four Military Sealift Command (MSC) vessels – deployed to Diego Garcia.ⁱⁱⁱ The ships carried equipment, fuel, water, provisions and ammunition to “increase inter-theater mobility”^{iv} within the U. S. Central Command. Military appropriation bills for 1981 through 1983 included funds for a Marine Corps program to preposition equipment and supplies for three full Marine brigades. In 1986, the NTPF was renamed the Navy’s Afloat Prepositioning Force. The change allowed 12 of the original NTPF ships and the 13 Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) to be combined under a single command called MSC Prepositioned Group ONE.^v

Prepositioning in the Gulf War

The 1990 Persian Gulf War offered the first real-world test of the prepositioning program. In most areas, the program responded better than expected; USMC MPS ships enjoyed the most significant successes. The 1st and 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEBs) were activated for Operation Desert Shield in mid-August 1990. Their prepositioned material was deployed from Guam and Diego Garcia respectively, and both brigades were in theater, fully outfitted and combat ready by 8 September. The only other unit to reach full combat effectiveness that quickly was the Army's 82nd Airborne Division. However, as a light infantry unit, the 82nd did not have the armor and artillery punch that the 1st and 7th MEBs brought to the fight. MPS ships began arriving in Saudi Arabia eight days after receiving the deployment order. It took over 20 days for fast sealift ships from the continental United States (CONUS) to arrive and Ready Reserve and charter vessels took more than 30 days to reach the Gulf.^{vi}

The Army Comes on Board

Based on the success of the Marine program, a 1992 DoD Mobility Requirements Study identified a need for the Army to preposition combat and combat support material afloat. This requirement was driven by the Army's objective to deploy a heavy corps anywhere in Northeast or Southwest Asia within 75 days. The study called for increased prepositioning and surge sealift capability. The requirement was validated in the 1993 Mobility Requirements Bottom-Up Review, and the support objective was modified from one to two major theater wars.^{vii} The requirement was revalidated in both the 1995 Mobility Requirements Bottom-Up Review Update and the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review.^{viii}

Prepositioning Forces Today

The APF currently consists of three major sub-components; the Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force (Enhanced) (MPF-E), the Army's Combat Prepositioning Force (CPF), and a Logistics Prepositioning Force (LPF). There are a total of 37 ships forward deployed in Guam, Diego Garcia, and in the Mediterranean Sea. Each MPF-E squadron contains all of the combat and combat support equipment (excluding aircraft) for a MEB-sized Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF), including a fleet hospital, expeditionary airfield, equipment for a Seabee battalion, and 30 days of food, water, ammunition and fuel. The CPF contains all required equipment and support items for an Army 2X2 brigade, including port opening equipment, and 15 days of ammunition, food and water. It is important for planners to note that the CPF carries no bulk fuel stores. The LPF consists of a variety of ships including Navy hospital ships, Air Force and Navy munitions ships, Marine Corps Aviation Support ships and Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) oilers and tankers.^{ix}

COMMON PREPOSITIONED ITEMS

Although each individual service prepositions its own unique material, there are many items common to two or more load lists.

General Purpose Vehicles

All of the services preposition some general purpose vehicles (cargo trucks, forklifts, busses, dump trucks, etc.) and trailers, but with almost 3600 general purpose vehicles and nearly 3000 trailers the Army has far more than any other service.^x The Marine Corps is adding equipment to support a Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) to their load

lists as part of the MPF(E) program, and combat engineer equipment is already part of the Army's afloat prepositioned stocks.

Expeditionary Airfields

The Marine Corps and Air Force both have material prestaged to create expeditionary airfields. Part of the Marine Corps MPF(E) program is the addition of portable hangars and matting to construct a 5,000 foot expeditionary runway, similar to the matting already contained in the Air Force Bare Base equipment list.^{xi} Many services also include collapsible fuel bladders and airfield fuel delivery systems of varying degrees. Bulk fuel is carried on MPF ships (5.2 million gallons per squadron) and Defense Logistics Agency chartered tankers. Both DLA and Marine Corps fuel ships have the ability to discharge at sea or in port, and the MPF ships carry a ship-to-shore delivery system that allows fuel discharge as far away as to two miles from shore.^{xii}

Habitability and Personnel Support

All services have basic habitability and personnel support material such as tents, latrines, portable kitchens, water purification and generation units, generators, and climate control equipment. While force size and support duration may vary, everyone has a significant amount of food and water prepositioned as well. The amount of food, water, fuel and ammunition stockpiled by each service is different. Each Marine preposition set includes consumables to support a force of up to 17,000 troops for as many as 30 days, while Army stores are only sufficient to feed and equip 19,000 troops for 15 days.^{xiii} The Navy keeps a 500-bed Combat Tactical Zone Field Hospital prepositioned in Diego Garcia, and as part of MPF(E), the Marine Corps is adding a 200-bed Navy Field Hospital to each brigade set.^{xiv}

The Army also has a 296-bed Mobile Surgical Hospital prepositioned in its afloat brigade set.^{xv}

Material Management Requirements

All prepositioned equipment has similar management concerns; it needs to be maintained in combat ready condition, material with a limited shelf life (food, water, medicine, etc.) needs to be replaced periodically, and technological assets such as weapons and communications systems need to be kept current with modifications and upgrades. Without periodic maintenance and stock replacement, any time saved by insertion of afloat prepositioned material is lost to maintenance, modernization and upgrade requirements immediately following offload.

PREPOSITIONED MATERIAL DIFFERENCES

As discussed above, some prepositioned items are common across several or all service components. Differing missions and personalities of each service, however, result in some unique items and different approaches to prepositioned fleets.

Common Items in Different Quantities

Heavy combat equipment is prepositioned by both the Army and Marine Corps, but types and quantities of equipment vary drastically between the MPF and CPF. For example, both services have M1A1 Abrams Battle Tanks in their prepositioned inventories. To outfit one heavy brigade, the Army maintains 123 of them, while one MPS squadron holds only 58 M1A1s for its Marine Expeditionary Brigade. Both services maintain 155mm Howitzers afloat; the Army has 24 self-propelled units compared to 30 towed Marine guns. As an amphibious force, the Marine Corps relies heavily on its Amphibious Assault Vehicles (AAV) and includes 109 in each brigade set. The Army has no AAVs. Instead, they have

226 Armored Personnel Carriers and Bradley Fighting Vehicles. The army deploys TOW missile systems on its Bradleys, while the Marines mount the TOW systems on HMMWVs.^{xvi}

Maintenance

All equipment, regardless of service, requires maintenance in order to keep it in ready for issue condition. In accordance with Joint Chiefs of Staff instruction:

The service owning the pre-positioned cargo will determine...cargo maintenance requirements. Cargo maintenance should be scheduled concurrent with vessel maintenance whenever possible...Cargo and vessel maintenance will be scheduled by the service after coordination with USCINCTRANS (as appropriate) and the affected CINCs.^{xvii}

In order to meet U. S. Coast Guard safety requirements, both the Army and Marine Corps have established 30-month maintenance cycles for their ships. Each ship returns to the United States for a 45-day maintenance period every 30 months, during which the cargo is completely unloaded. While off the ship, each piece of equipment is inspected, modified, modernized, and repaired or replaced as necessary before returning it aboard.^{xviii} The upgrade, modernization, and replacement programs however, are service specific and funded through each service's Operations and Maintenance (O&M) budgets.

Aviation Component

While the aircraft themselves must be flown in - either under their own power or via airlift - all of the support equipment for the Aviation element of the MAGTF, is part of the MPS loadout.^{xix} In contrast, the CPF provides support solely for the ground elements of an Army heavy brigade, which has no organic aviation component. Army aviation requirements are managed separately by the Air Force and typically utilize bare base kits prepositioned ashore.^{xx}

Load Plans

Possibly the single largest difference between MPF and CPF ships are the manner in which they are loaded. As an expeditionary force, the Marine Corps has designed MPS load lists to support a variety of missions requiring a wide range of force sizes. Each ship in an MPS squadron can support a “MEU-Slice”^{xxi} as small as 2,700 troops, and any combination of ships can be utilized to equip larger forces up to an entire MEB (using all of the ships in the squadron). Additionally, every MPS squadron carries exactly the same equipment. This means that while each squadron is normally associated with only one MEB, squadrons and MEBs are fully interchangeable, providing planners a great deal of flexibility if needed.^{xxii} In contrast, the Army’s CPF ships are loaded for one mission only – to deliver a 2X2 heavy brigade. While “battle books”^{xxiii} allow planners to identify exact commodities on specific ships, selective offload to support a small force is extremely difficult.

ARE THERE ANY CANDIDATES FOR JOINTNESS?

Because of the similar missions and significant number of common items prepositioned by each service, it takes only a short leap of logic to consider migrating at least some, if not all of the Afloat Prepositioned Force to a joint management system. While at first glance this is a logical step to enhance a joint war-fighting capability, further analysis reveals that the question is more complex than simply identifying similar items.

Fuel

One of the easiest commodities to manage at a joint level is fuel. Currently, DLA claims three fuel tankers in the LPF, with roughly 25.4 million gallons of fuel aboard, and the Marine Corps has almost 16 million gallons of fuel divided between the three Maritime Prepositioning Squadrons (MPSRONs). While the addition of the Marine Corps fuel to the

DLA inventory would hardly be noticed by DLA, the loss of direct control of that fuel would cripple the MAGTF. As an expeditionary force, the MAGTF must be wholly self-sufficient until in-theater logistics can be established. Currently the Army carries no bulk fuel in the CPF. As a result, one of the essential elements for success is the “availability of bulk fuel within the AO.”^{xxiv} Because the Marines carry their own fuel and ship-to-shore distribution capability, they are able to independently establish a toehold in any theater. If bulk fuel was removed from the MPSRON, the Marines would either need advance logistics units to procure local fuel, or one of the DLA tankers would have to deploy with each MPSRON. While this is not a problem in the case of a full MEB deployment, the limited number of DLA tankers would severely restrict the number of effective MEU-Slice operations.

Munitions

The National Military Strategy defines power projection as “the ability to rapidly and effectively deploy and sustain U. S. military power.”^{xxv} By this definition, the Logistics Prepositioning Force is a power projection force, not a combat force. The elements of the LPF, while having no inherent combat potency, are critical to the geographic Combatant Commander’s ability to conduct operations. Without the fuel, munitions and medical support provided by the LPF, Combatant Commanders would be limited to in-theater or airlift capable operations only. The variety of munitions required by today’s military precludes joint management. While the small arms used by all services are alike, the real combat power lies in the heavy weapons; artillery, bombs, missiles, torpedoes, Naval gunnery, etc. Joint management could result in a significant reduction in combat capability if the ships currently loaded with service specific munitions are homogenized; space restrictions dictate

that to fit a larger variety of munitions on any given ship, the quantity of each must be reduced.

Personnel Support Items

Food, tents and other habitability items currently prepositioned by all of the services also could be considered for joint control. DLA manages the CONUS stocks of these items, and is the procurement source for all service needs. It would be relatively easy for DLA to recapitalize the prepositioned stocks of these habitability items and return them to centralized inventory control. Like fuel, however, food, tents and water must be available to the on-scene commander upon arrival in theater. The equipment prepositioned by both the Army and Marine Corps is designed to support combat operations. Without these support elements organic to the unit, combat operations can not commence.

Humanitarian Relief

Each service states a primary mission area for their prepositioned material is to support humanitarian relief missions. Why not, then establish one or more sets of equipment and support items specifically designed for such a mission? The sets could be managed either by a single world-wide commander or by regional Combatant Commanders. The equipment in each set would be identical, allowing any force assigned - Army, Marine Corps, NATO, UN, or another coalition - to use it as needed. The principle problem with this proposal is a lack of resources. The equipment and ships required to create specialized afloat humanitarian relief packages would either need to be removed from existing stocks or procured specifically for this purpose. In the current environment of shrinking defense budgets, the likelihood of funding a new procurement is virtually non-existent, leaving the option of stripping equipment and supplies from existing prepositioned stocks. As discussed

above, one of the greatest strengths of the prepositioning program is its relative independence from outside support. Removing critical food, fuel, ammunition, and equipment from the brigade sets (either Army or Marine) significantly reduces the combat effectiveness of the program. The MEU-Slice load planning model currently used by the Marine Corps allows a single MPF ship to be employed as a stand alone unit. With this capability, the Marines can effectively utilize the MPF to support humanitarian relief missions. While the Army's CPF is not as flexible as the MPF, they have a substantial amount of material prepositioned ashore that can be accessed if needed.

Joint Maintenance

As discussed above, every piece of equipment that is prepositioned requires periodic maintenance, as do the ships in which the material is stored. It is logical, then to assume that a joint maintenance program for both the equipment and the ships themselves would reduce costs and help homogenize the force. There are over 6,000 general purpose vehicles and 4,000 trailers in the prepositioned inventory, all of which have very similar maintenance needs. Currently the Marine Corps has a single maintenance facility in Florida at which all of the MPF material is offloaded and maintained. The ships, too, are overhauled and repaired at this site in accordance with U. S. Coast Guard guidelines. The Army's CPF is similarly maintained at sites in California and South Carolina. The argument has been made that only one of these three sites is required. In the mid 1990s, a series of studies was conducted to determine the cost of merging these sites into a single entity. The studies considered all aspects of the merger, from base infrastructure improvements to ship modifications required for navigating the inland waterways to the facilities. One study concluded that merging the Florida and South Carolina facilities would result in a cost avoidance of only \$4.7 million

annually (in FY94 dollars),^{xxvi} and did not consider the California site at all. All of the studies agreed that the security risks involved in relying on a single maintenance site strongly outweighed the relatively small savings. With the rise of asymmetric threats in the modern world, these risks become even more evident. Additionally, with independent maintenance facilities, the chain of command for each is clearly defined. Establishing a joint maintenance facility could add as many as three layers of management to the system; TRANSCOM to coordinate vessel schedules, the geographic Component Commander to ensure the facilities and workforce are available, and a Joint Command or executive agent to coordinate maintenance priorities and manage the facility itself.^{xxvii} The intangible costs associated with the increased security risk and muddled command and control process clearly outweigh the minuscule cost savings. For these reasons, establishing a joint maintenance facility is a bad idea.

DIFFERENT MISSIONS MEAN DIFFERENT NEEDS

The stated purpose of the Marine Corps MPF is to provide geographic Combatant Commanders with the ability to “rapidly establish a MAGTF ashore that is prepared to conduct subsequent combat operations across the operational spectrum.”^{xxviii} According to the U.S. Army’s Field Manual 100-17-1, the purpose of the Army’s prepositioned fleet is “to project a heavy force early in a crisis...to rapidly reinforce a lodgment...to protect key objectives...to open a port in theater [and] to be prepared to conduct subsequent operations across the range of military operations.”^{xxix} The key difference between these missions is the time frame in which they are expected to be effective. Army doctrine requires that the initial force be combat ready within 15 days of receiving the deployment order (C+15), with

the full force in place within C+30.^{xxx} The Marines, however, call for the entire MAGTF to be combat ready in C+10.^{xxxii}

By definition, the Marine Corps is an expeditionary service. Simply stated, their mission is to deploy quickly, establish a secure toehold, and redeploy when the objective has been attained or they are relieved. Afloat prepositioning is designed with these basic missions in mind. The MPF is loaded primarily with the light equipment required to rapidly secure an area of operations. The limited heavy weaponry included in the MPF is only a small portion of the combat effectiveness of the equipment set. The Army, on the other hand, is aligned more toward long term action and heavy combat. The CPF load plan is designed to support a heavy armor or mechanized brigade. It is designed to open Sea and Air Ports of Debarkation (SPOD/APOD) to allow additional combat and support forces to land via airlift or sealift, or to establish a large enough combat force to allow closure of additional forces and to support the theater commander's campaign plan.^{xxxii}

These basic mission differences drive the need for independent, service-specific afloat prepositioned material. Army doctrine specifically states that the CPF might be used to augment an amphibious operation, but it also makes it clear that it can not replace amphibious operations, and that amphibious operations are the exclusive domain of the Marines.^{xxxiii} Marine Corps doctrine also identifies the difference between MPF and amphibious operations, but makes it clear that the equipment aboard the MPF can be used to replicate an amphibious capability without impacting existing operations. The MPF is a self-contained equipment set that will support 17,300 Marines with food, water, fuel, and ammunition for as long as 30 days. The CPF contains only enough provisions for a 19,000 man force for 15 days. The CPF has no organic fuel capabilities, and the ammunition is

stored aboard different ships than the combat equipment. The Army's potency with the CPF relies on their ability to quickly establish lines of communication, both within and outside the theater.

THE FUTURE OF AFLOAT PREPOSITIONING

Concern about the future is prompting changes in the afloat prepositioning arena. Availability of friendly SPODs and APODs in a theater such as Southwest Asia have raised serious concerns about the ability of today's afloat prepositioning fleet to effectively perform its mission. LtGen Edward Hanlon, head of Marine Corps Combat Development Command, summed it up best; "I think there is a pattern developing that most of us have now seen occurring over the last 10 or 15 years...access to friendly airfields, access to friendly seaports, access to land bases ashore is becoming more and more dicey and more and more difficult all the time."^{xxxiv}

The Navy and Marine Corps have teamed up to lead the charge for the future of the Maritime Prepositioning Force. One of the primary thrusts of study is based on the concept of "Seabasing." Defined as "operating at sea independently from land bases,"^{xxxv} seabasing is considered "the most profound and most joint"^{xxxvi} of the transformational plans the Navy is reviewing to support not only the Navy/Marine Corps team, but the entire joint force.

Mobile Offshore Bases (MOB)

One seabasing option being evaluated is the Mobile Offshore Base (MOB). While no specific plans exist yet, MOBs could very well resemble modern off-shore oil platforms specifically designed for the MOB mission. One plan calls for a series of six or more 500 foot platforms to be linked together to create a 3,000 foot or longer floating base of steel.^{xxxvii} The success of any MOB design includes the ability to receive troops and equipment at sea,

billet personnel during the marrying-up phase, and move troops and equipment from the MOB to the shore quickly and efficiently. The job of transporting troops and equipment ashore could be the single point of failure for the MOB concept. According to Global Security.Org, seabasing is dependent on “high-speed, reliable and survivable surface craft and aircraft able to deliver logistics support where and when needed. The [Heavy Lift Landing Craft Air Cushioned (HLCAC), Landing Craft Utility Replacement (LCU-R), and heavy lift Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft (MV-22)] will answer this requirement.”^{xxxviii} Modular High Speed Vessels (HSVs) are also being considered for ferry duty between MOBs and the shore.^{xxxix} The new Marine Corps warfare doctrine “Operational Maneuver From The Sea (OMFTS)” is expected to be in place by 2010, and relies heavily on seabasing for its success.^{xli} In the concept paper *Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond*, Gen Krulak identified four pillars of the MPF(F); force closure, amphibious task force (ATF) integration, indefinite sustainment, and reconstitution and redeployment. Force closure is the ability to assemble troops and equipment off shore prior to employment. As discussed above, this is one of the driving principles of the Navy’s MOB plan. ATF integration refers to the ability of MPF(F) ships to selectively offload their cargoes to reinforce combat elements already ashore. Indefinite sustainment, another key mission of the Navy’s MOB, moves the amphibious assault force’s logistics infrastructure from rear shore areas to afloat bases. Reconstitution and redeployment refer to using seabasing to repair, rearm and reload the MPF fleet at the conclusion of the mission.^{xlii}

Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) Ships

While no final plans have been approved yet, the future of afloat prepositioning is assured. The MPF(F) is scheduled to be in place by 2009,^{xlii} the mission needs statements

(MNS) for MPF(F) have been approved and design efforts are underway. Two independent ship design agents were tasked with developing cost effective designs that meet the Navy's MNS while incorporating Marine Corps requirements. They provided three design options to the Navy for review. The designs range from pure cargo vessels to fully air capable ships with the capacity to service 30 Joint Strike Fighters. All of the designs use current mono-hull forms, and are well within today's technological capabilities. While a final design for the MPF(F) has not yet been approved, it will most likely incorporate attributes from each of the design agents.^{xliii} Once these ships become available, it is conceivable that the Army will convert its afloat prepositioning fleet as well so they can take advantage of all of the benefits of seabasing.

CONCLUSION

As the U. S. military transforms itself in the 21st century, the trend toward jointness becomes stronger and more visible. Joint logistics supporting homogenized forces using common equipment is becoming more and more prevalent. From a joint Primary Air Training System (JPATS) to Joint Strike Fighters (JSF) and Joint Logistics Over the Shore (JLOTS), the goal of reducing logistical overlap by designing multi-function, multi-service weapons platforms is being met. While some may argue that joint control would allow a smaller APF, the fact is the aggregate requirement remains the same regardless of who is in charge. Potential cost savings of joint maintenance are overshadowed by intangible costs of unclear command and control, fuzzy budgeting, and higher operational risk. Common and consumable items, while easily converted to central management, are critical to combat effectiveness and management must remain with the end users.

The mission of each respective service remains unique. The distinct requirements driven by these unique missions preclude merging the existing APF into a single joint entity. While it is true that a tank is a tank, and a truck is a truck, the means of employment differ significantly between the Army and Marine Corps. The very nature of warfare is viewed differently by the Marine Corps and the Army; the Marines excel at “get in and get out” expeditionary missions, while the Army is designed for longer term, sustained operations.

The future of the APF is exciting. Plans for the MPF(F), MOBs, HSVs and the use of fast ferries are in the developmental stages today. As these plans move from the drawing boards onto the oceans of the world, America’s ability to project power and conduct global military operations will increase greatly. While the distant future may bring more jointness to the APF arena, the fact remains that today’s program works best when managed by the warfighters.

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